Measurement of Digital Platform Work and Workers

Closed 30 Nov 2022

Opened 14 Oct 2022

Contact

measuring.employment.consultation@abs.gov.au

Feedback updated 19 May 2023

We asked

The ABS commenced public consultation on 14 October 2022 on the measurement of Digital Platform Work and Workers.

The public consultation ran for around 6 weeks and sought feedback on:

1. The conceptual framework – the conceptual understanding of digital platform work as applied to the Australian context; and
2. The measurement approach – the proposed survey topics to be incorporated in the digital platform work experimental survey module for 2023/24

You said

This public consultation generated a small number of submissions from a variety of stakeholders, including government, business, and the public. This was in line with expectations, given this is a new measurement space where there aren't many longstanding experts. We specifically sought feedback on the measurement approach the ABS was taking and the conceptual framework that had been developed. The feedback received is summarised below.

The Conceptual framework:
There was strong support for the framework the ABS developed, to better

communicate and understand digital platform workers and work. The distinction the ABS made between labour services and other forms of digital platform work was considered appropriate, along with distinguishing between different types of tasks (e.g. personal transport and food delivery).

The Measurement Approach:
There was broad support for the current experimental measurement approach the ABS is using. The submissions noted that the priority information is being captured and also identified a range of additional data items that could be collected to broaden and enhance the data collected for the 2023/24 survey cycle.

The feedback provided has been summarised below:

- Reference period - expand the timeframe beyond the last four weeks, to ensure people who undertake digital platform work infrequently are included.
- Task type – include further specificity in task types (e.g. type of caring tasks).
- Industry – present an industry distribution of digital platform work.
- Digital platform hours worked – a variety of options were suggested for collecting information on digital platform work hours worked and whether more paid hours were preferred by workers.
- Reason for undertaking digital platform work – ability to select more than one reason.
- Working conditions and security - level of control or influence the respondent has over digital platform work arrangements.
- Platform use – Whether multiple platforms are used and how this is managed by the worker.
- Safety and risk – perception of safety at work, understanding of work health and safety obligations, measures available to reduce risk.
- Earnings - allowing respondents to report earnings in smaller increments (e.g. less than 10% of earnings, etc).
- Other data sources - exploration of other mechanisms for collecting data, such as administrative data.

We did

The ABS is grateful for the submissions received through this consultation process and has taken these into consideration in determining the content for inclusion in the next stage of the experimental digital platform work survey module, for the 2023/24 financial year. As the module is part of a broader survey program, new content needs to be balanced with other competing priorities within the program and the need to ensure a reasonable experience for survey respondents.

The following changes will be incorporated into the digital platform work survey module, which will be progressively collected from July 2023:

Reference period/frequency

- the reference period has been expanded to include; any digital platform work tasks undertaken in the past 12 months, detailed questions are asked about work undertaken in the previous 4 weeks, and whether tasks have been undertaken within the Labour Force Survey Reference Week; and
- frequency that DPW tasks are undertaken (e.g. weekly, monthly etc) is requested to understand how regularly digital platform work is undertaken.

DPW task type

- further questions added to determine more task information, including-the type of delivery work undertaken (e.g. food, grocery or parcels) and the type of caring tasks performed (e.g. disability care, aged care, childcare etc).

Working conditions/hours

- whether the respondent has a preference for more hours of digital platform work; and
- how work is allocated and how hours and price are set.

Work safety

- whether a workplace accident has occurred undertaking digital platform work
- perception of safety at work; and
- whether covered for personal accident insurance in case of a work-related accident.

The ABS will continue to inform the evolutionary approach to measuring digital platform work and workers. Any additional feedback is welcome at measuring.employment.consultation@abs.gov.au.

Overview

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), like most national statistical organisations, is working to expand its statistics on relatively new and emerging forms of employment, including digital platform workers.

While digital platform workers and their work have always been included within

existing labour statistics on employment and hours, they are a relatively small group of workers who have not been separately identifiable.

Specifically measuring digital platform workers and their working arrangements will provide insights into the extent to which this working arrangement is used in Australia, how this is changing over time, the nature of digital platform work and the characteristics of digital platform workers.

The ABS is working with other Australian Government agencies and the international statistical community to provide conceptual understanding and measurement of digital platform workers.

Conceptual understanding

The international statistical community are in the process of developing conceptual and measurement approaches for new forms of employment, including digital platform work. The ABS is involved in these discussions and is leveraging the experience of a broad range of countries, given this is still a relatively new area of labour statistics around the world.

The ABS is taking the evolving international conceptual and measurement frameworks for digital platform workers and applying it in the Australian context, beginning with a series of experimental questions asked of respondents in the outgoing survey rotation group in the Labour Force Survey.

The ABS is seeking input on the conceptual understanding as applied to the Australian context.

Measurement approach

The ABS has developed an initial experimental survey module on digital platform workers, which it is currently in the process of testing. The initial module is included in the ABS Multi-Purpose Household Survey, which is asked of outgoing respondents in the monthly Labour Force Survey, for the 2022-23 financial year.

From this, the ABS expects to progressively analyse data through 2022-23, to identify further refinements to the survey questions for 2023-24, and to determine what initial experimental statistics can be produced from 2022-23 data. In time, the ABS will add a dedicated module within the 'Characteristics of Employment' supplementary topic in the Labour Force Survey, which already collects a broad range of working arrangement information from employed people on an annual basis.

The ABS is seeking input on the proposed survey topics with feedback to be incorporated in the survey questions to be tested in 2023-24.

What happens next

The ABS will consider all submissions received from this consultation and will provide an update on future directions in early 2023.

The ABS will not respond to individual submissions, instead a summary will be published in response to all submissions.

Public consultation and ongoing engagement will continue to inform the evolutionary approach to measuring digital platform work and workers.

Related

Submission Guide-measuring digital platform work and workers
471.5 KB (PDF document)

Overview of ABS activity to measure digital platform work and workers
427.4 KB (PDF document)

Measuring Digital Platform Work and Workers Feedback Survey

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